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# Security Council

Seventy-third year

*Provisional*

**8239**th meeting
Thursday, 19 April 2018, 4 p.m.
New York

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| *President*: | Mr. Meza-Cuadra | (Peru) |
| *Members*: | Bolivia (Plurinational State of) | Mr. Inchauste Jordán |
| | China | Mr. Wu Haitao |
| | Côte d'Ivoire | Mr. Dah |
| | Equatorial Guinea | Mr. Ndong Mba |
| | Ethiopia | Mr. Woldegerima |
| | France | Mr. Delattre |
| | Kazakhstan | Mr. Tumysh |
| | Kuwait | Mr. Almunayekh |
| | Netherlands | Mrs. Gregoire Van Haaren |
| | Poland | Mr. Radomski |
| | Russian Federation | Mr. Polyanskiy |
| | Sweden | Ms. Schoulgin Nyoni |
| | United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland | Mr. Allen |
| | United States of America | Ms. Tachco |

## Agenda

The situation in Liberia

Final progress report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Liberia (S/2018/344)

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*The meeting was called to order at 4.10 p.m.*

**Adoption of the agenda**

*The agenda was adopted.*

**The situation in Liberia**

**Final progress report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Liberia (S/2018/344)**

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Liberia to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Alexander Zouev, Assistant Secretary-General for Rule of Law and Security Institutions in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, and Mr. Chid Liberty, Chief Executive Officer of Liberty and Justice.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I should like to draw the attention of the members of the Council to document S/2018/344, which contains the final progress report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Liberia.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear briefings by Mr. Zouev, Ambassador Irina Schoulgin Nyoni, Deputy Permanent Representative of Sweden, on behalf of the Chair of the Liberia configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, and Mr. Liberty.

The Council has before it the text of a statement by the President on behalf of the Council on the subject of today's meeting. I thank the Council members for their valuable contributions to this statement.

In accordance with the understanding reached among the members of the Council, I shall take it that the members of the security Council agree to the statement, which will be issued as a document of the Security Council under the symbol S/PRST/2018/8.

I now give the floor to Mr. Zouev.

**Mr. Zouev** (*spoke in French*): First of all, I convey our most sincere condolences to the Ivorian delegation and to the Security Council on the tragic death of His Excellency Mr. Bernard Tanoh-Boutchoue, Permanent Representative of Côte d'Ivoire to the United Nations. I think that I can speak on behalf of all of us in saying that we have lost a distinguished diplomat and an invaluable partner and colleague.

(*spoke in English*)

Today marks a historic milestone for Liberia, a founding Member of the United Nations. For almost 25 years, the situation in Liberia was so concerning that it was constantly present on the Council's agenda, but the country has turned an important corner. On 30 March, our peacekeeping operation — the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) — concluded after successfully achieving the mandate for which it was deployed by the Council almost 15 years ago.

It would be no exaggeration to characterize the Liberia of 2003 as a country in ruins, with a traumatized population and a predatory State. We may never know the full human cost of the more than 14 years of successive, brutal civil war, but we know that far too many citizens suffered from human rights violations, far too many families were displaced, and far too many citizens were victims of sexual violence. I myself witnessed the extent of the destruction — but also the opportunity for renewal — when I visited Monrovia in early 2004, while working on the delicate matter of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants.

It is important to remember the past — the untold suffering wrought on the people of Liberia, the destabilization that the country's conflict brought to the entire region — in order to fully appreciate the long path to peace that Liberia has travelled since the Council adopted resolution 1509 (2003), authorizing the United Nations to take over peacekeeping responsibilities previously assumed by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

The Council has before it the Secretary-General's final report on UNMIL dated 13 April (S/2018/344). As the report reflects major developments in Liberia through the conclusion of UNMIL's mandate, I would like to highlight just a few recent issues.

By-elections originally scheduled to be held in May to fill senatorial seats vacated by the President and Vice-President have been deferred due to a lack of agreement between the National Elections Commission and the Government regarding the budget for those elections, which will be held in two of Liberia's

most populous counties. National institutions have demonstrated on numerous occasions their ability to plan, organize and secure sensitive political events such as elections. However, at least for some time, the Government and its partners will continue to face the challenge of ensuring that national institutions receive the financial and other investments needed to sustain their continued development.

President Weah continues to consolidate his Government and is progressing in his efforts to pursue a pro-poor vision for the country. Among the specific deliverables promised is the development of Liberia's road network. The Government has signed a memorandum of understanding with a foreign private firm to obtain a loan of $536 million to develop a road along Liberia's border with the Atlantic Ocean. Some have raised concerns about the agreement, given that the terms and conditions have yet to be fully disclosed, and could have long-term social and economic repercussions, as has been the case with many concession agreements.

Meanwhile, last week the Government launched its road map for achieving its pro-poor national development agenda. This approach seeks to situate the poor at the centre of public governance, including by seeking their input, so as to ensure that economic growth arising from development initiatives will benefit the most vulnerable. Going forward, it will remain essential that all partners remain closely engaged in efforts to finalize and implement the national development agenda, which will align with the Sustainable Development Goals.

Although it is a signatory to the Declaration of Table Mountain on press freedom, over the past week the Government has had to reiterate its full commitment to freedom of speech, as some in the media had expressed apprehension. The United Nations will continue efforts aimed at building mutual confidence between the media and Government.

The conclusion of UNMIL's mandate on 30 March, as determined by resolution 2333 (2016), was a remarkable demonstration of confidence that the country is moving steadfastly along the path of sustained peace. Now, with the people and Government of Liberia, lies the important work of continuing to build a nation — a unified, reconciled nation with an accountable Government committed to addressing corruption within its ranks; a nation where all citizens share the benefits of Liberia's abundant natural and human resources; and a nation fully responsible for its own destiny, with institutions and a Government providing basic guarantees of security, protection and services to all its citizens.

Although UNMIL has completed its mandate, and will soon complete its liquidation, the United Nations remains in the country to support the people and the Government of Liberia.

(*spoke in Spanish*)

I thank the Government of Peru for supporting important themes for the maintenance of peace as part of its duties as President of the Security Council this month. The legacy of UNMIL demonstrates the value of the maintenance of multidimensional peace and the capacity of the United Nations to support a country from conflict to peace. Working with the Government of Liberia and its people, UNMIL was able to prevent the recurrence of armed conflict through post-conflict peacebuilding and progress towards lasting peace and sustainable development.

(*spoke in English*)

I wish to conclude by expressing our appreciation for the essential role played by the Council in restoring and consolidating peace to Liberia, including through the deployment of UNMIL; appreciation for the personnel of UNMIL — civilian and uniformed, women and men — who served with professionalism, dedication and a deep commitment to achieving its mandate; and appreciation for the countries that contributed troops and police to UNMIL. I remember with appreciation the service and sacrifice of the 202 United Nations peacekeepers who lost their lives in pursuit of peace in Liberia. I would like to express our appreciation for the United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, whose role in Liberia has been and will remain essential, and for the partners — bilateral, regional and international — whose contributions helped the United Nations to conclude the peacekeeping chapter in Liberia, and whose continued support for Liberia will help to cement our positive legacy.

(*spoke in Russian*)

I also wish to express our appreciation for UNMIL's leadership. I would like to take a moment to recognize the presence in the Chamber of Mr. Farid Zarif, the last UNMIL Special Representative of the Secretary-General. His focu on preventive diplomacy was key in steering the mission through its final but still

critically important phase of mandate implementation. The presence today of Mr. Zarif and other former UNMIL personnel in their capacity as private citizens is a testament to the significance of our collective achievement that this session serves to underscore.

(*spoke in English*)

Lastly, I wish to convey our profound appreciation and admiration for the people of Liberia, whose resilience was a decisive factor in turning the page on crisis and conflict, and whose determination will ensure that the hard-won peace is sustained. The United Nations will continue to accompany the people and the Government of Liberia in building a nation that remains at peace with itself and with its neighbours, free from the scourge of war, with the hard-won stability enduring for all of Liberia's future generations.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Zouev for his informative briefing.

I now give the floor to Ambassador Schoulgin Nyoni.

**Ms. Schoulgin Nyoni** (Sweden): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for the invitation to brief the Security Council on behalf of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC). This is, indeed, an historic moment — the final Security Council meeting on Liberia and the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL).

The Security Council has accompanied Liberia through the painful years of civil war, through the challenging years of peacebuilding that followed, through the trying times of the Ebola pandemic and now, finally, transition. With successive mandates to observer missions and peacekeeping operations, sanctions regimes, panels of experts, resolutions and statements, this organ has remained committed to a peaceful Liberia.

On 27 May 2010, at the request of the Liberian Government, Liberia was placed on the agenda of the Peacebuilding Commission. Since then, the PBC has engaged in building peace in Liberia. As Chair of the country configuration, Ambassador Skoog visited Liberia from 21 to 25 March. He did so in order to engage with the new Government and a wide range of stakeholders. His aim was to identify peacebuilding priorities beyond the peacekeeping presence and to discuss the future engagement of the PBC in Liberia.

The Commission played a key role in supporting the work of the Government and UNMIL in the development of the peacebuilding plan requested in resolution 2333 (2016). The statement of mutual commitments on peacebuilding in Liberia between the Government and the Peacebuilding Commission has been a key mechanism of the PBC's engagement with Liberia. The peacebuilding priority areas identified in the most recent statement of mutual commitments are security sector development, strengthening the rule of law, promoting national reconciliation, and peaceful and inclusive elections in 2017. That statement, as well as the peacebuilding plan, will now form part of the basis for the new Government's national development plan.

Over the almost 15 years of its successful mission, United Nations peacekeeping in Liberia through UNMIL has been at the forefront of efforts to lay the critical foundation for peace in Liberia. It has disarmed more than 100,000 combatants and protected millions of civilians, assisted in rebuilding the police, justice and security institutions, facilitated the provision of humanitarian aid, and supported the development of national capacity to promote and protect human rights. UNMIL's mission did not come without a cost. We should never forget the 202 peacekeepers who lost their lives in the service of peace during the nearly 15 years that the Mission was deployed in Liberia.

UNMIL has benefited from a series of excellent Special Representatives of the Secretary-General. The PBC Chair would like to commend in particular Special Representative Farid Zarif, Deputy Special Representative for Rule of Law Waldemar Vrey and Deputy Special Representative/Resident Coordinator Yacoub El Hillo. Their engagement and strong commitment has been crucial to bringing the Mission to a successful conclusion in partnership with the Government of Liberia.

After today, Liberia will no longer be on the Security Council agenda and the United Nations peacekeeping mission will have ended its operations. However, the PBC and the United Nations are still very much involved in supporting Liberia in this new chapter. With regard to the transition from UNMIL to a United Nations presence, the Commission has consistently recommended the continuation of the good offices role and political accompaniment of the United Nations, as well as the provision of the expertise needed for political analysis and the implementation of the peacebuilding plan following the closure of UNMIL.

The good offices of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, the mediation efforts of President Obasanjo and other efforts by the European Union, the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States and the broader international community were crucial in the recent election. It is strongly recommended that the good offices function be preserved during a period of heightened risk of tension in Liberia's ongoing transition.

Delivering on the promise of sustainable development is essential to building resilience, successfully completing the transitions and reducing the risk of violent conflict or a return to conflict. Allow me to briefly outline some of the key challenges where support from the international community will be needed as we move forward.

We cannot ignore the fact that several of the root causes of the conflict in Liberia remain. Addressing decentralization and land issues, as well as ensuring greater access to justice and increased capacity in the security and justice sectors, will be crucial for the continued consolidation of peace. They must be addressed in the new Government's national development plan. The need to strengthen the rule of law and reconciliation is crucial. In addition, legislation on violence against women is also still outstanding.

It remains imperative for the PBC to continue to push for renewed and sustained political leadership of the key structural reforms, as set out in phase I of the peacebuilding plan. Moving forward, such reforms will help to address some of the root causes of conflict in Liberia. Greater integration of the United Nations sustaining peace efforts is critical in that regard. That includes ensuring that sustaining peace in solidly reflected in the United Nations Development Assistance Framework and that all parts of the United Nations system on the ground support the national development plan in an effective and coordinated way. The PBC has an important role to play in encouraging such support and in working with all parts of the United Nations system to make sure that it happens.

It is clear that concrete progress with regard to the reforms will also be dependent on economic growth and financial capabilities. The difficult economic situation has a continued negative impact on the population. However, the Government is clear that it has the necessary political will and energy. To illustrate that, the President has decreased his salary by 25 per cent.

When President Weah met Ambassador Skoog, he assured him that Liberia had an enthusiastic and energetic new Government that was committed to ensuring the best future for the people of Liberia. However, the President stressed that the new Government would need the continued support of the international community. He stressed the importance of partnerships in that regard. The PBC will continue to work closely with the World Bank and other international financial institutions in that regard. It will also encourage greater private sector engagement. The Liberia multi-partner trust fund, with predictable funding from international partners, in combination with the Peacebuilding Fund's catalytic support, has the potential to be an effective mechanism to enable the continued implementation of the country's peacebuilding priorities.

To conclude, the Peacebuilding Commission will continue its political accompaniment and support continued international attention. The Peacebuilding Commission will work alongside the Resident Coordinator and the United Nations country team to support the Government's work towards sustainable development through the development of Liberia's national development plan. The Peacebuilding Commission will also discuss a framework of engagement as an option to ensure mutual accountability between the Government, the United Nations and the Peacebuilding Commission, including for the important outstanding priorities of the Liberia peacebuilding plan.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Ambassador Schoulgin Nyoni for her informative briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Liberty.

**Mr. Liberty**: Before I begin, I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for inviting me to brief the Security Council today on my experience in Liberia. As a Liberian-American, it is also among the highest honours of my life to have the opportunity to address the representatives of the Permanent Mission of Liberia to the United Nations and, of course, the entire Council.

My name is Chid Liberty. I am an entrepreneur. My family came to the United States when I was only five years old to seek refuge from the deteriorating political situation in Liberia. By the time I had reached my teenage years, Liberia was in the middle of a full-blown civil war. The war in Liberia was brutal, characterized particularly by the use of child soldiers and conflict-related sexual violence. However, I am here to report

that today, through the social and political organizing of civil society groups, such as Leymah Gbowee's Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace, through the regional intervention of our friends in the Economic Community of West African States, with the help of bold political home-produced leaders, such as Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, and through the actions of this body, Liberia is truly a peaceful country once again.

In January, Liberia completed its first transition from one democratically elected Government to another such Government in 71 years. Our election was not perfect, but it was a testament to the Liberian people's commitment to our stable peace. Through months of challenges and investigating irregularities, all sides remained committed to a fair election and a peaceful transition.

Liberia's peace is about more than just our physical safety. As for many here, as a young man in the United States, Liberia became synonymous with those photos of young boys dressed in ripped army fatigues, carrying semi-automatic weapons. I therefore cannot express the feeling in my heart when, on my way to work in Monrovia on gorgeous mornings, I see children dressed head to toe in school uniforms. The only marching that our children are doing is into the classroom and onto the playground. Despite our low school enrolment rates, Liberians are more committed than ever to educating our next generation. My business, Liberty & Justice, makes and distributes free school uniforms to children who cannot afford them. Research of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology shows that when school uniforms are donated, attendance increases by up to 62 per cent and test scores improve. Out of every three young girls who receives a donated school uniform, two will delay their first pregnancy. We pay for the unforms through the sales of our brand, UNIFORM, which is sold predominantly here in the United States through a partnership with Bloomingdale's.

Our peace is not just for kids. When I first got back to Liberia in 2009, we had a poverty rate of approximately 80 per cent and a formal unemployment rate of 80 per cent. That really drove the decision of myself and my partners to start a factory to provide formal jobs for women, particularly those who were internally displaced or vulnerable to chronic formal unemployment. Women are left out of the formal economy, especially in such major industries in Liberia as mining, rubber and logging. With the help of United States impact investors, we established the first fair trade factory in Liberia and begin shipping orders for American brands and, eventually, our own brand uniform. I wish to note that the security guards at our factory are all former child soldiers who now protect the very women they used to victimize.

Today, Liberia's per capita gross domestic product has almost recovered to its pre-war levels despite major setbacks from the Ebola outbreak and a drastic slide in commodity prices. However, this is not about statistics. It is about real people. I am inspired to share the story of one of our workers. Jenna came to the factory in 2010 without enough money to even afford a matching pair of slippers. During the war, her first husband abandoned her with a few of her children and moved to Sierra Leone, leaving Jenna and her children as refugees in their own country. They lived in one of the camps for internally displaced persons on the outskirts of Monrovia. One day, Jenna's women's group told her that there was a factory offering jobs and that she did not need to know how to read or write. Fortunately for us, Jenna came. Although she could not fill out any paperwork, it turns out she has an incredibly rare talent — operating a sewing machine. She quickly became and still is the number one sewing machine operator in our factory. Over the past eight years, she has learned to read and write through programmes sponsored by the factory. Today Jenna is employed, literate, remarried, food-secure, healthy and happy, and has all her children in school.

I am here mostly to give thanks. We know that the commitments, financial and otherwise, were not easy to make when this organ unanimously adopted resolution 1503 (2003). I am also here to report that United Nations investments were not made in vain. The United Nations Mission in Liberia officially ended its functions in March, and I can say that Liberia is truly a post-conflict success story. Mission accomplished. However, I would be remiss in letting the mission end here.

As we look to the future, Liberia now more than ever needs to strengthen our private sector. We have a young population that needs to be educated, employed and engaged in the democratic process. I hope we can all agree that to continue the spirit of the Mission means we all need to find ways to invest in Liberia's youth. We need foreign investment in young entrepreneurs that will create Liberia's jobs of the future, build our domestic tax base, and support our civil society. Many people think investing in Liberia is still too risky; however, having seen Liberia lose a generation first-

hand, I know that the risk of investing in Liberia is nowhere near as risky as not investing in Liberia.

I thank the Council for the honour of addressing it today.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Liberty for his informative briefing.

I now give the floor to those Council members who wish to make statements.

**Ms. Tachco** (United States of America): I should like to thank the Assistant Secretary-General for Rule of Law and Security Institutions, Mr. Zouev, as well as Ambassador Schoulgin Nyoni of Sweden, for their remarks today. I would especially like to welcome Mr. Liberty to the Council today and to thank him for his briefing and for telling us about his very inspiring work on the ground in Liberia.

Today we reflect on the history of a more than 14-year-long peacekeeping mission that made an invaluable contribution to peace and security in a country racked by years of civil war, chaos and hopelessness. In the 14 years before the arrival of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) in 2003, Liberians endured a horrific civil war that killed up to a quarter million men, women and children, and left half of Liberia's population displaced. Throughout the fighting, human rights violations and abuses, including torture, rape, sexual slavery, summary executions and the unlawful use of and recruitment of child soldiers were prevalent.

A comprehensive peace agreement finally brought the calm that allowed for the arrival of UNMIL. UNMIL has played an indelible role in Liberia's return from devastation through the application by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General of good offices, the reporting of its political and human rights units, the mentorship of its police units to their Liberian counterparts, its capacity-building of Liberia's courts, and at times its very physical presence. UNMIL has made a difference. It helped Liberia navigate the challenging days that come with any overwhelming transition.

Last month, a Mission that had more than 15,000 military personnel at its height saw the last of its military, police and civilian numbers depart. The United States commends the personnel and leaders of UNMIL for their service and sacrifice in establishing peace and security, and remembers those who lost their lives in its pursuit. UNMIL's personnel should never forget that their presence really changed lives. The Council's action has had tangible impact as well, and as penholder the United States thanks past and present Council colleagues for their collaboration and commitment to Liberia over all these years.

At UNMIL's 30 March closure, we were able to look back and see that it was able to achieve so much. Many of its achievements reflect the success that is possible when certain factors are in place. One year ago, Ambassador Haley outlined a set of peacekeeping principles as a pathway to more efficient operations and successful outcomes. For UNMIL, many of the conditions outlined in those principles were in fact in place, and we believe they played a significant role in the Mission's success and its eventual ability to close.

First, UNMIL enjoyed strong relations in collaboration with the host country Government. From its earliest support to elections to its recent collaboration on the peacebuilding plan for Liberia, the Mission and the Government were real partners working towards a common goal — peace and security for Liberians. Secondly, UNMIL's mandate was realistic and achievable. It was called on to support political solutions, help the country recover from total devastation, build the capacity of its core institutions, and consolidate democracy through elections and the democratic transfer of power. The conduct of elections is a challenging enterprise no matter where they happen, and UNMIL worked with the Government and regional and international partners to contribute to their successful execution. During the contentious challenge in 2017, the Mission engaged stakeholders to ensure they employed legal channels. After the challenges had run their course and elections resumed, we understood just how far Liberia and its institutions had come.

The United States also commends the leadership of UNMIL's last Special Representative, Mr. Farid Zarif, and mission personnel who worked arduously in preparation for the conduct of elections. We commend the leadership of Presidents Johnson Sirleaf and Weah and the candidates in the elections for finding a resolution that put the people of Liberia first and that brought about the first democratic transition of power in over 70 years.

Finally, we want to address the issue of reconciliation and human rights. In any post-conflict setting, the complex challenges of reconciliation and healing can linger. However, despite the passage of

time and positive momentum, addressing them remains critical. As former South African President Nelson Mandela once said, "true reconciliation does not consist in merely forgetting the past". In that spirit, we strongly commend the national reconciliation conference led by the Liberian Government last month. We applaud President Weah's call for inclusiveness and dialogue so that all in Liberia feel that they have been heard and included in the work to reconcile the past and forge a common Liberian national identity.

We also applaud the revised Strategic Road Map for National Healing, Peacebuilding and Reconciliation and the 12 agreed thematic areas of national reconciliation. We hope for immediate progress in the reconciliation objectives of the peacebuilding plan and realization of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's recommendations, along with the legislator's long-overdue passage of the land rights and local Government bills. We encourage the continued development of Liberia's Independent National Commission on Human Rights and its collaboration with civil society to further embed respect for human rights as a cornerstone of Liberian society. Moreover, we commend the agreement between the Government and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in the establishment of the OHCHR country office on 2 April.

The closure of the Mission sees the United Nations and Liberia beginning a different period in a different form. To prepare for this eventuality, in UNMIL's final mandate we asked the Mission and the Secretariat to develop a peacebuilding plan for Liberia, which they did in close consultation with the Government and civil society. We again thank all of those who put in the long hours and great effort to produce the plan in a remarkable 90 days, and we also thank all Member States, some represented here, that have made significant contributions towards the success of that plan. We encourage all of Liberia's partners to stand beside the Government as it seeks to unleash the potential of the country and its people.

In conclusion, UNMIL demonstrated what is possible when peacekeeping missions enjoy the full backing of the host country, support political solutions, have achievable mandates and put forth clear exit strategies. At this historic moment for Liberia, as the baton is passed from peacekeeping to further peacebuilding, we again commend UNMIL's significant achievements and applaud the contributions of its personnel and the sacrifices made by its peacekeepers. With the Mission's closure, we send our encouragement to the members of the United Nations country team and its Resident Coordinator as they adjust to a new and different phase of effort. But most of all, we salute the Liberian people and their resilience.

**Mr. Polyanskiy** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Assistant Secretary-General Alexander Zouev for presenting the final progress report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) (S/2018/344). We also thank Ms. Schoulgin Nyoni, who spoke on behalf of the Chair of the Liberian country configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), for the plans announced for the PBC's future participation in the country's development programmes. We also listened with interest to the statement by Mr. Chid Liberty, a representative of Liberian civil society.

The Russian Federation greatly appreciates UNMIL's efforts to stabilize the situation in Liberia, of which a recent example has been the measures undertaken by the Mission to assist in preparing and conducting presidential and parliamentary elections. The success of those events has helped to reinforce State institutions in the country and led to a general improvement in the situation. It is important that the Liberian people have managed to settle their election-related differences in a peaceful manner, harnessing their existing legal mechanisms through the Supreme Court.

Needless to say, today we should also remember those who have sacrificed their lives in peacekeeping missions in order to make it possible for us to consider this Mission closed. We want to warmly thank all of those who have contributed over the years to the success of a mission that becomes part of history today. In that regard, we want to particularly commend the good offices of Special Representative Farid Zarif. The United Nations presence has made a notable contribution to maintaining calm in the country during the post-election period.

We are satisfied with the security situation in Liberia. On the whole, it appears that the authorities are coping with the functions that were transferred to them from the United Nations peacekeepers in July 2016.

The democratic transfer of power that took place at the beginning of 2018 has made a considerable contribution to State-building. However, Monrovia is

still facing the challenge of ensuring the establishment of State institutions throughout the country. Until then, it is difficult to see how the authorities will be able to implement the provisions of the peacebuilding plan. Furthermore, Liberians are showing insufficient momentum in reforming law-enforcement bodies and the justice sector, which are crucial to the State's ability to maintain the necessary level of security. The new president of Liberia has major tasks ahead with regard to settling inter-ethnic and inter-communal conflict, resolving land and territorial disputes, and, crucially, restoring trust in the criminal justice system. It will also be important to pay serious attention to finding solutions to the underlying causes that led to the initial outbreak of the conflict, especially issues linked to land use.

We believe it is essential for Liberia to establish effective cooperation with countries in the region, particularly Côte d'Ivoire, in order to maintain stability in the border areas. These issues are becoming increasingly urgent in the light of the growing terrorist threats in the region. We also want to emphasize the importance of encouraging the process of returning Ivorian refugees to their homes.

We were pleased to note that the national health-care system has taken the lessons from the fight against Ebola on board. However, the epidemic prevention mechanisms must not be allowed to atrophy.

We hope that Monrovia will continue to work to strengthen its State foundations, maintain peace and stability and achieve consistent socioeconomic development.

**Mr. Radomski** (Poland): I would like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Alexander Zouev and Ambassador Irina Schoulgin Nyoni for their very informative briefings. I also thank Mr. Chid Liberty for his valuable remarks on the essential role of civil society in Liberia.

We meet today at a significant moment for the Government and the people of Liberia. The United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) completed its mandate on 30 March after almost 15 years of service. Fifteen years ago, Liberia was a completely failed State. Half of the population was forcibly displaced. Many citizens were victims of human rights violations. Despite that very low starting point, Liberia has gone through a remarkable journey of transformation, with the assistance of UNMIL. It is currently on the edge of a new era of greater inclusiveness and the equal participation of all Liberian citizens in the political and economic life of the country.

The inauguration of President George Weah was a milestone on the path of the post-conflict transformation of the oldest republic in Africa. Poland congratulates the people of Liberia and their political leaders on the progress they have made in restoring peace and on their persistent resolve to remain peaceful throughout the electoral process. We also commend the National Elections Commission and the Supreme Court, which ensured the credibility of that process.

We welcome the essential role played by civil society in restoring peace in Liberia. Religious and traditional leaders, representatives of women's and young people's groups, as well as election observer groups and the media, have made significant contributions to maintaining a transparent and peaceful electoral process.

Liberia is still facing many challenges, including a dire economic situation, limited progress in addressing the root causes of conflict, and structural inequalities. It will be important to enhance accountable governance and build the democratic foundations of the nation. We therefore welcome the leadership shown by President Weah and his commitment to fighting corruption, promoting good governance and taking national reconciliation forward, as well as advancing constitutional reform and decentralization. We also appreciate the Liberian authorities' efforts to give priority to the Sustainable Development Goals in the country's national development plan, which will help to sustain peace and lay a foundation for sustainable and inclusive development.

Despite the closure of the peacekeeping operation, the United Nations should remain closely engaged in supporting Liberia in its efforts to meet its challenges to sustaining peace and achieving sustainable development. It is our obligation to preserve UNMIL's gains and achievements and support dialogue on the challenges the country still faces.

Finally, we would like to express our appreciation to UNMIL for restoring and sustaining peace in Liberia. We thank Special Representative Farid Zarif for his excellent leadership. We also thank his predecessors who contributed to the achievement of UNMIL's mandate. And we pay tribute to the 202 United Nations peacekeepers who paid the ultimate price in the pursuit

of peace in Liberia. As we can see today, their sacrifice was not in vain but has brought back hope and peace to the people of Liberia.

**Mr. Dah** (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): My delegation thanks Mr. Alexander Zouev, Assistant Secretary-General for Rule of Law and Security Institutions, and Ms. Irina Schoulgin Nyoni, speaking on behalf of the Chair of the Liberian configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, for their briefings. My delegation would also like to thank Mr. Farid Zarif, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his tireless efforts to bring stability to Liberia as Head of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL).

The briefing bringing us together today is especially important to my delegation, marking as it does the symbolic closure of a third peacekeeping operation in West Africa, after those of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone and the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire. That reflects the effectiveness of our shared Organization and its resolute focus on its primary purpose of maintaining peace and security around the world.

The closure of the United Nations Mission in Liberia marks a defining moment in that country's history, but also for the United Nations in its strategic and pragmatic approach to peacekeeping operations around the world. The lessons learned from UNMIL's experience will unquestionably enable us to strengthen the effectiveness of our structures and mechanisms dedicated to preserving international peace and security.

Côte d'Ivoire would like to take this opportunity to salute the memory of the 202 peacekeepers who lost their lives in the service of peace during the 15 years of the deployment of the United Nations Mission in Liberia. Liberia has achieved reconciliation and enjoys excellent relations with neighbouring countries, including Côte d'Ivoire, as President George Weah's recent trip to Abidjan on 4 and 5 April demonstrates.

I would also like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the essential contribution of the Liberian political stakeholders, who decided to place their national interests above all other considerations during a critical period in their country's history. My thanks also go to the United Nations and to all the bilateral and multilateral partners whose multifaceted contributions have enabled Liberia to restore peace and stability. Along with the rest of the Council, my delegation welcomes Liberia's evolving sociopolitical development, as manifested in the recent holding of open, transparent and peaceful elections and an exemplary political transition that shows Liberia to be a country that has definitively chosen a path of peace and democracy.

Many challenges remain, but we believe firmly that the commitment and political will of the new Liberian authorities will enable Liberia to begin again on solid ground. In that regard, we note the Government's determination to combat corruption, promote good governance and advance the national reconciliation process. However, it will need the support of the international community if it is to strengthen the credibility and legitimacy of its governmental institutions. As the Secretary-General has called for, international efforts must therefore continue so that Liberia's partners can support the Government's efforts to sustain peace and strengthen the investments that have already been made towards the country's lasting stabilization. Liberia's fresh start must be based on a sound footing so that it can make resolute progress towards development in the interests of its people.

The final departure of a United Nations peacekeeping operation is a milestone and marks the host country's break from a long, painful but instructive interlude towards a transition to sustainable development and stability. Building on the results achieved with a view to sustaining peace and stability will continue to be essential in order to prevent any backsliding. It is therefore incumbent on the United Nations country team, along with the Government of Liberia and regional and subregional organizations, to work together towards that goal.

For its part, Côte d'Ivoire reiterates its readiness to share its experiences with its neighbour with a view to helping it to regain peace and stability once and for all, within the framework of a dynamic bilateral partnership between the two States.

**Mr. Woldegerima** (Ethiopia): We thank Mr. Alexander Zouev, Assistant Secretary-General for Rule of Law and Security Institutions, for his briefing. We also appreciate Sweden's efforts in its role as Chair of the Liberia configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, and we thank Ambassador Irina Schoulgin Nyoni for her briefing, including on the Chair's recent visit to the country. We were also pleased to hear the views of Mr. Liberty.

Liberia has indeed made remarkable progress in consolidating its peace and stability and strengthening its democratic institutions. The peaceful and successful holding of the recent legislative and presidential elections clearly demonstrated the resilience of the country's democratic institutions. We congratulate the people and the Government of Liberia on their achievement in ensuring a democratic transfer of power. That is a success for Africa as a whole, as well as for Liberia and the region.

The United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) completed its mandate last month at a time of great hope and optimism, and we appreciate its important contribution to promoting peace, stability and development in Liberia. In the words of the country's newly elected President George Weah, the United Nations has had a positive impact on the lives of Liberians, as well as on every part of the fabric of Liberian society, since its arrival in 2003. We appreciate the dedicated efforts of Special Representative Zarif and the civilian and military personnel of UNMIL, as well as the contributions of the troop- and police-contributing countries. We pay tribute to the 202 peacekeepers who made the ultimate sacrifice in advancing peace in Liberia. Ethiopia is proud to have played its part in the stabilization of Liberia through its contribution of three infantry battalions to UNMIL.

We welcome the adoption today of presidential statement S/PRST/2018/8, which, among other things, requests the Secretary-General to undertake a study of the role of UNMIL in the resolution of conflicts and challenges in Liberia, with a view to drawing lessons for the best practices of United Nations peacekeeping missions in transition. We believe that will be vital to enhancing the overall effectiveness of United Nations peacekeeping.

In spite of the remarkable progress made over the past decade and a half, Liberia still faces enormous challenges. That is why it needs the continued support of the international community, post-UNMIL, to sustain peace. We believe that the efforts to address the root causes of conflict should be enhanced by fostering reconciliation, strengthening democratic institutions, promoting popular participation and expanding social services. In that regard, we welcome the alignment of Liberia's national development agenda with the Sustainable Development Goals, which will help to address poverty in Liberia and improve the economic situation of its society's most vulnerable sections, particularly women and young people. We also note the continued implementation of the Liberia peacebuilding plan, developed in close consultation between the United Nations, the Government of Liberia and partners. Its implementation will be vital to sustaining peace in the country, and we hope that all stakeholders will fulfil their commitments and support its full implementation. The Peacebuilding Commission and its Liberia configuration play an important role in that regard, and their ongoing active engagement will continue to be absolutely vital.

Finally, as Liberia opens a new chapter in its history, we hope that the United Nations, the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States and other bilateral and multilateral partners will continue to support and accompany the country's efforts to build and sustain peace.

**Ms. Schoulgin Nyoni** (Sweden): Let me begin by thanking Assistant Secretary-General Alexander Zouev and Mr. Liberty for their briefings today, which capture both the distance that Liberia has travelled since the civil war and its possibilities for the future.

At the outset, I would also like to commend the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) for its efforts in support of the people of Liberia as they moved from the ashes of war to rebuild their country. It is worth taking a moment to appreciate the fact that the United Nations Mission in Liberia is a mission that has successfully delivered on its mandate. It did so by building trust with the Government and the people of Liberia. UNMIL's well-planned transition phase is indicative of the Mission's professionalism and will ensure that the United Nations continues to support the country going forward. I commend Special Representative Zarif for his leadership and good offices. We also pay tribute to the peacekeepers and civilian personnel who lost their lives while promoting peace, stability and development in Liberia.

I must admit that it is quite special for me to participate in this, the very last Security Council meeting on UNMIL, having served as the only Swedish diplomat in Monrovia during the transition period in 2004 and 2005. At the time, UNMIL was new and had just started to bring hope of an end to the violence. At the same time, I know that Ambassador Skoog would have liked to be present to add his personal impressions to his briefing as Chair of the Liberia configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission. However, as the Council is

aware, he is in Sweden making the final preparations for the Council's visit over the weekend. I hope that the Council will allow me to convey the Ambassador's impressions and thoughts from his recent trip instead.

First, the transition from UNMIL to the United Nations country team illustrates how far Liberia has come. The security situation in the country is stable. The elections put the Liberian constitutional framework to the test. The use of legal means to address grievances after the elections underscores the progress that has been made in the rule of law over the past 13 years. The elections also demonstrated Liberians' strong desire to maintain peace and actively engage in strengthening democracy in the country. During his time in Liberia, Ambassador Skoog was particularly impressed and heartened by Liberia's young people and their commitment to peace and the democratic process. They are a vital resource for the country that the new Government must harness and nurture. The next generation of Liberians has high expectations and will hold the Government to account.

The election process, however, also reminded us of the complexity and fragility of the situation. As I said in the briefing, many of the root causes of the conflict remain. Tackling those issues is a prerequisite for an inclusive and equitable society. Continued reforms and the enactment of pending legislation on, for example, land rights, local Government and domestic violence will be of paramount importance in that regard.

As we have said many times before, there can be no peace without development and no development without peace, or without respect for human rights. Taken together, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the sustaining peace resolutions form a powerful framework for building peaceful, prosperous, inclusive and sustainable societies. The Sustainable Development Goals represent the indispensable building blocks for the resilience that is needed to support peaceful democratic transition and reduce the risk of violent conflict. Liberia's rich natural resources mean that the Government has the opportunity to promote the revitalized economy that the country so desperately needs. However, to harness that potential and to build trust, the country's natural resources must be managed in an open and transparent way, assuring long-term gains for all of the people of Liberia.

During his visit, Ambassador Skoog was honoured to participate in the Liberia Moment Conference. The Conference, which was also attended by the Deputy Secretary-General, the President of Liberia, United Nations leadership and youth representatives, among others, marked the starting point for an in-depth consultation process by the Government on the design of its new national development plan. It also marked a farewell to UNMIL. Following his meeting with the President, Ambassador Skoog noted that the new Government was both committed and engaged, and already taking the lead in identifying the country's challenges and formulating priorities for the future. The President's pro-poor agenda and commitment to anti-corruption are promising. We are looking forward to seeing how those commitments will be translated into action that can deliver tangible improvement in the lives of Liberians, not least in the rural areas. It will be imperative to ensure that the new Government takes forward residual tasks in the peacebuilding plan and the statement of mutual commitments as part of the new national development plan. Ambassador Skoog reiterated that point throughout his visit.

Lastly, as we celebrate the successes, we must remain conscious of the challenges ahead. There is a real risk that the Government will not be able to meet the high expectations for clear and quick results in people's lives. The President underlined to Ambassador Skoog the continued need for partnerships and support. It is therefore essential to ensure that international attention on Liberia does not wane. There will continue to be a need for a strong and coherent United Nations presence in the country going forward, with the capacity to support the Government in preventing conflict and addressing its root causes. Ensuring political capacity and sustaining the good offices that have been so crucial in Liberia will continue to be important, as will support to the Resident Coordinator's Office. As we saw during the elections, the Economic Community of West African States will also have an important role to play in support of the country.

The international community must also ensure continued and predictable resources for sustaining peace. The planned multipartner trust fund, managed by the Resident Coordinator in cooperation with the Government, could be an excellent vehicle for coordinated and predictable support, in combination with the catalytic support of the Peacebuilding Fund.

The transition will not end when the peacekeepers leave, and Liberia should not fear being left to face the challenges of the future alone. We, the partners

of Liberia, are committed to sustaining peace in Liberia. As Chair of the Liberia configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, we will continue to play our part.

**Mr. Delattre** (France) (*spoke in French*): France welcomes the end of the mandate of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), but I would like to begin by thanking Mr. Zouev, Assistant Secretary-General for Rule of Law and Security Institutions, and the Deputy Permanent Representative of Sweden for their very insightful briefings. I would also like to thank Mr. Chid Liberty for his relevant and particularly encouraging remarks.

As I mentioned, France welcomes the end of the mandate of the United Nations Mission in Liberia. Its withdrawal demonstrates that it has fulfilled the duties entrusted to it. Although the United Nations is so often and so unfairly pilloried, this is another peacekeeping success story for the Council and for the United Nations as a whole. It can be added to the list of recent success stories in Côte d'Ivoire, Sierra Leone and Haiti.

UNMIL was established in 2003 with a mandate to enforce the ceasefire. Throughout its 15 years in the country, it has made a significant contribution to stability in Liberia. I would like to take this opportunity to pay a well-deserved tribute to all the United Nations personnel who participated in the Mission and contributed to its success on the ground day after day, particularly the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Farid Zarif. I would also like to pay tribute to the memory of the 202 Blue Helmets who lost their lives in Liberia. The considerable progress that the country has made since 2003 goes a long way to making their sacrifice worthwhile. UNMIL's success should serve as a source of inspiration to the Council as it deploys other peacekeeping missions in difficult situations where they face challenges in fulfilling their mandates. It reminds us that the recipe for success lies in a strong commitment on the part of the Council, which kept the Mission in Liberia for 15 years, as well as in the implementation of a genuine national reconciliation process on the ground, without which long-term stability would be impossible.

UNMIL's departure does not signal the end of the United Nations in Liberia. On the contrary, it provides an opportunity for the Organization to adopt new support strategies with frameworks and instruments that can better meet the current needs of the Liberian people. The United Nations country team on the ground, in close cooperation with the Liberia configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, will therefore continue to provide support. It is also essential that the broader international community continue to support Liberia, alongside the new United Nations mechanism. As Mr. Liberty so eloquently stated, that is the key to sustaining the excellent results gained so far, promoting development in the country and creating jobs. It is also fully in line with the Secretary-General's vision of mobilizing the international community throughout the conflict cycle, which we fully support.

Liberia was recently able to demonstrate how far it has progressed along the road to democratization and stabilization. The peaceful holding of the most recent elections is a major achievement, to the credit of all Liberian stakeholders. It marks the first peaceful transition between two democratically elected Presidents since the civil war began, which tells us that Liberia has turned the page and is now a truly mature democracy. The recent transfer of power in Liberia also represents a response to the deep aspirations of the Liberian people. It is a truly historic moment. France has expressed its willingness to support President Weah in achieving the ambitious goals that he has outlined for his country. We therefore call on all of Liberia's partners to support the new Government's national development plan.

Regardless of the progress that has been made so far, we should not underestimate the challenges that Liberia still faces on the road to sustainable development and peace. They include the fight against corruption and the issues of national reconciliation and governance, especially through the rebuilding and operationalization of the Liberian armed forces. Other challenges include the problem of ensuring respect for human rights, especially the situation of women, which cannot be considered satisfactory until considerable progress has been made in combating gender-based violence. Liberia's lasting stabilization will also require major efforts to combat impunity and energetic action to address the root causes of conflict.

Our meeting today celebrates UNMIL's true success in the service of Liberia and its people. That success, however, is only one stage on the long path to sustainable development and stabilization in Liberia. As President Macron emphasized to President Weah when he visited Paris at the end of February, France will stand firmly beside its Liberian partners in order to ensure that Liberia continues advance in that direction.

**Mr. Tumysh** (Kazakhstan): We thank Assistant Secretary-General Zouev for his insightful briefing on the final progress report (S/2018/344) of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL).

(*spoke in Russian*)

We thank Mr. Alexander Zouev.

(*spoke in English*)

We would also like to express our deep appreciation to our dear friend and colleague, Ambassador Schoulgin Nyoni, for updating us on the work of the Liberia configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission. And we commend Mr. Chid Liberty, of Liberty and Justice, for his efforts to provide economic opportunities for Liberians. We would like to make four points on the subject of today's meeting.

First, we wholeheartedly congratulate the people of Liberia and the United Nations on the country's successful elections, its historic democratic transfer of power and the successful conclusion of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL). We commend the Liberian people for the fact that they have come such a long way in restoring peace in their country. They should be supported by the international community as they work to consolidate their hard-won achievements.

Secondly, we are encouraged by President Weah's determination to address the remaining challenges — including, among other things, the economic situation, poverty, structural inequalities and, most of all, corruption — and to promote good governance and national reconciliation. To achieve those goals, Monrovia will require ongoing bilateral and multilateral political support and technical expertise from the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States and neighbouring countries. That should be reinforced by active United Nations engagement through the United Nations country team, the Peacebuilding Commission and the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel.

Thirdly, we welcome the launch of an inclusive process for formulating a new national development agenda for the period from 2018 to 2024, as well as the Government's vision for addressing poverty and its people-centred approach to development. We commend its alignment of that strategy with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and call on the Government to continue its efforts to empower women and young people and to apply a whole-of-pillar approach to the security-development nexus, among other things. We also fully endorse and share in the words of Deputy Permanent Representative Pawel Radomski of Poland with regard to the role of religious leaders in fostering peace. We would like to remind our colleagues of the Arria Formula meeting on that subject that my Mission is organizing in cooperation with the Alliance of Civilizations, to be held next Tuesday.

Fourthly, we believe that predictable and sustainable financial assistance will be critical to rebuilding Liberia, especially with regard to infrastructure, development, education, health, the rule of law, land reform and youth development. It is our earnest hope that the international community and donors will come forward to respond generously to the appeal for funds for the newly established multi-partner trust fund in order to enable Liberia's peacebuilding plan to reach its goals. At the same time, the Government should continue to reduce its dependency on aid and establish an environment conducive to foreign investment and economic and fiscal recovery. It will also be equally important to consolidate the Government, bring about national reconciliation and transitional justice, mitigate humanitarian crises and respect human rights.

In conclusion, we fully support and welcome the presidential statement (S/PRST/2018/8) adopted today on UNMIL. We would like to express our appreciation to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Zarif, and the Mission's personnel for their contribution to restoring stability in Liberia. We also pay tribute to all United Nations peacekeepers who lost their lives in the pursuit of peace in the country. We look forward to the results of the study of the role of UNMIL in the resolution of conflicts in Liberia, and believe that the lessons learned will help to improve the effectiveness of United Nations peacekeeping missions. I would like to once again reiterate Kazakhstan's commitment to working with members of the Security Council and others to ensure a peaceful and prosperous future for Liberia.

**Mr. Almunayekh** (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would very much like to thank Mr. Alexander Zouev, Assistant Secretary-General for Rule of Law and Security Institutions, Ambassador Schoulgin Nyoni, speaking on behalf of the Chair of the Liberia configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, and Mr. Chid Liberty for their valuable briefings.

Approximately 15 years have passed since the Council established the United Nations Mission in

Liberia (UNMIL) pursuant to resolution 1509 (2003), in order to support and rebuild a nation devastated by two civil wars that had persisted for 14 years, resulting in thousands of victims and ruined infrastructure and requiring the deployment of more than 180,000 peacekeeping troops.

We are here today to discuss UNMIL's successful withdrawal. We rarely discuss an item on the Council's agenda with a positive conclusion, but this is a moment that we hope will be repeated in the future with many peacekeeping missions. Liberia today is a perfect example of local, regional and international engagement working together to build a State capable of sustaining itself. We applaud UNMIL's efforts, with the support of international partners, to rebuild and promote the country's security sector and achieve stability in Liberia. The international community must continue to support Liberia after the Mission's withdrawal through the United Nations country team and the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel. We also welcome the moral and sustained support provided by the Peacebuilding Fund of the Peacebuilding Commission in its efforts on behalf of Liberia's development.

The role of the United Nations country team will increase in importance following the Mission's withdrawal, particularly in the light of the difficult economic situation facing Liberia today. We therefore call for continued support from the United Nations country team, as well as the United Nations Development Programme, the Peacebuilding Commission and international partners to implement various development projects aimed at achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, as Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed indicated during her visit to Liberia this past month. The Liberian people will face challenges following the withdrawal of the United Nations Mission. However, we are certain that they are ready to overcome them. We urge Special Representative Mohammed Ibn Chambas to provide the necessary good offices and support of the United Nations Office for West Africa to the Liberian Government during the next stage so as to meet the Government's needs with regard to developing the infrastructure and a system of governance.

I would like to take this opportunity to convey my gratitude to UNMIL and the Mission's staff, particularly those who sacrificed their lives to ensure security and stability in Liberia. I also thank the Secretary-General, Special Envoy Farid Zarif and his predecessors for their tireless efforts in achieving the progress that we are witnessing today in Liberia so as to become a success story in Africa. I would be remiss if I failed to commend the work of the Economic Community of West African States to achieve stability and support the work of the United Nations in Liberia, especially in the context of the presidential elections in December 2017. The elections demonstrated the determination of the authorities in Liberia and their independence in holding credible, transparent and successful elections. We appreciate the role played by political stakeholders in Liberia in turning to the national justice system for the settlement of electoral disputes.

I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate the people of Liberia on achieving a successful outcome. That would not have been possible without their determination. I convey my gratitude also to the recently elected President of Liberia, His Excellency Mr. George Weah, for assuming his new office. We welcome all his efforts and initiatives to achieve a number of goals, including improving the economic situation, promoting investments and fighting corruption, as well as encouraging good governance, national reconciliation and ,lastly implementing, the Sustainable Development Goals.

In conclusion, it seems fitting for me to quote from President Weah's inaugural address:

> "Ending a peacekeeping mission successfully is something in which all Liberians and her partners should take great pride. We thank all Member countries of the United Nations for [their] support, and I promise to continue to build on the success that we have achieved together".

**Mr. Inchauste Jordán** (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): We express or gratitude for the briefings by Mr. Alexander Zouev, Assistant Secretary-General for Rule of Law and Security Institutions in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations; Ms. Irina Schoulgin Nyoni, Deputy Permanent Representative of Sweden, on behalf of the Chair of the Liberia configuration in the Peacebuilding Commission; and Mr. Liberty, whose presentation provided us with an encouraging perspective on his country.

We are pleased by the political and social stability that Liberia has been able to achieve since the deployment of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), which ended its operations on 30 March. The

inclusive democratic process and the participation of stakeholders at all levels in the political sphere, together with the contribution of the international community and the United Nations, have made it possible to achieve the goal of stability that the people of Liberia have longed for. We commend the work of UNMIL and its leadership in fulfilling its mandate, including monitoring the ceasefire and supporting the Liberian Government's efforts to strengthen peace and stability, as well as actively contributing to the protection of civilians, training local security forces and working to create a peaceful environment conducive to the holding of the elections held last year.

We also acknowledge and emphasize the work of the Peacebuilding Commission, which is intended to support Liberia's efforts in the areas of security sector reform, the rule of law, reconciliation and national cohesion. Similarly, we believe that promoting development in Liberia is a priority area. It is imperative that peacekeeping, peacebuilding and development programmes be integrated in a coherent manner so as to respond effectively in the post-conflict context. We are aware that Liberia must continue to deal with important challenges — peacebuilding is a daily effort that requires the active participation of all the people of Liberia and of the entire international community.

We highlight the transfer of security responsibilities to the Liberian authorities in connection with the democratic process the main objective of which was the holding of the October 2017 presidential and representative elections and the transfer of political and administrative power to the new Government in January 2018. The important ties linking good practices, inclusive dialogue and strengthening cooperation between UNMIL and the Liberian Government have made achieving that important milestone possible. We also appreciate the outstanding contributions and good offices provided by the African Union and subregional organizations, exemplified par excellence by the outcome of the summit conference of the Economic Community of West African States Authority of Heads of State held in June 2017, which led to the signing of the Farmington River Declaration, pursuant to which the majority of the Liberian political parties committed to carrying out the peaceful holding of elections, which was fully borne out by the electoral process.

We also underscore the outstanding work of Ms. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, former President of Liberia, who paved the way leading to the stability of her country. We are confident that His Excellency President George Weah will continue to lead the Government and the people of Liberia on the path towards consolidating the process of national reconciliation through inclusion and combating impunity for abuses committed during the civil war. Ensuring the welfare of the population, in particular the most vulnerable groups, must be the main interest leading towards stabilization and definitive peace for the sole benefit of the Liberian people.

We would be remiss if we did not mention the impact that the Ebola epidemic, which resulted in a situation that went far beyond a mere health crisis. Ebola and its rapid spread throughout Liberia caused the humanitarian situation to deteriorate drastically and that country to become the most affected in the region, both by virtue of the number of deaths and of cases reported. We believe that to be an urgent wake-up call for the international community so that a crisis of those proportions is never repeated in any country in the world.

Lastly, we express our gratitude to UNMIL and pay tribute to all the men and women of its military, police and civilian components who spared no effort in fulfilling its mandate, while demonstrating their deep commitment over the past 15 years and successfully concluding the work that has laid the groundwork for prosperity in Liberia.

**Mr. Wu Haitao** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Assistant Secretary-General Zouev and Ambassador Schoulgin Nyoni for their respective briefings. China listened closely to the briefing by Mr. Liberty.

The security situation in Liberia has stabilized in recent years and economic development is back on track. China is confident that under the leadership of President Weah the Liberian Government and its people will achieve even greater success on the path of nation-building and development.

China pays tribute to the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) as its mandate has come to an end and commends it for the important contribution it has made to maintaining peace and stability in Liberia. United Nations peacekeeping operations are an important means of maintaining international peace and security. China has always believed that United Nations peacekeeping should be subjected to timely adjustments in accordance with actual conditions and developments on the ground, up until its final exit.

At the same time, it is necessary to fully respect the will of the countries concerned and to work in close coordination with countries of the region and subregional organizations. UNMIL is a success story that is worth studying in order to identify lessons learned. Following the departure of UNMIL, we call upon the international community and Liberia's bilateral and multilateral cooperation partners to enhance coordination with the country. We also call on the United Nations country team and the Peacebuilding Commission, as well as regional and subregional organizations, to strengthen coordination with the Liberian Government and to leverage their own expertise to play a positive role in strengthening the capacity-building of the country and to continue to assist Liberia in its economic and social development and the improvement of people's livelihoods.

Whether in nation-building or fighting the Ebola outbreak, China has consistently stood by Liberia's side. China has actively participated in UNMIL operations. In 2017, the United Nations conferred Peace Medals to all members of the Chinese peacekeeping riot squad. In February, the squad was awarded Liberia's national medal by President Weah.

Looking forward, China will continue to pursue an African policy based on sincerity, practical results, affinity, good faith and upholding the values of friendship, justice and shared benefits. China will forever be a true friend and reliable partner of Africa. China will continue to play a constructive role, alongside the international community, in order to help the African continent achieve durable peace, prosperity and development.

**Mr. Ndong Mba** (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me, at the outset, to express my thanks to Assistant Secretary-General Alexander Zouev and Deputy Permanent Representative Schoulgin Nyoni for their detailed briefings on the situation in the Republic of Liberia.

We in Equatorial Guinea have always closely followed the developments in the Republic of Liberia and now much more so as a member of the Security Council, since we are dealing with a brotherly country whose problems we care about and have felt as almost our own. That is why I would like to convey Equatorial Guinea's total commitment and support for the pacification, stabilization and normalization of the situation in this brotherly country. In fact, during the Ebola crisis, my country contributed $3 million to the three affected countries in the region.

Overall developments in Liberia have been very positive and stable. The country has made commendable efforts to consolidate the political and economic development process under way, and it is important that the international community continue to assist the country in those efforts.

We would like to congratulate the Government and the people of Liberia and all the actors in the country for the civic and peaceful manner in which the electoral process took place — beginning in October 2017, with the holding of the first round of elections for the presidency and the House of Representatives, and culminating successfully on 26 December 2017, with the holding of the second round of the presidential elections, which led to the election of His Excellency Mr. George Weah as President.

The successful conclusion of the political process in Liberia was also made possible by the joint work of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the African Union and the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), whose work I commend. Furthermore, the successful outcome of the situation in Liberia confirms the validity and appropriateness of regional efforts to resolve disputes.

The end of UNMIL's mandate, on 31 March, has opened a new stage in the history of Liberia that should serve to consolidate peace and enable this brotherly country to optimize its undeniable economic potential. The international community and donors must honour their commitment to implementing the peacebuilding plan in Liberia. The presence of the Peacebuilding Commission is very important at this stage.

Liberia is a good example of how the goodwill, positive attitude and sense of responsibility of the different political actors can lead to the successful outcome of a situation that seemed very complex. That fact should fill the Council with hope as it continues its efforts to restore and build peace in conflicts, complex as they may be. Peace in Liberia is an asset for the Council, ECOWAS, the African Union and, above all, the people of Liberia — the primary winners in this long crisis.

My wish is that the positive signs and developments we see in Guinea-Bissau will follow the example of Liberia and obtain the same results after the legislative

elections in November and the presidential elections next year.

Finally, I wish to pay glowing and well-deserved tribute to UNMIL for its commendable and tireless efforts to promote peace, security and stability in this brotherly country. We pay tribute to the UNMIL troops who, over the course of the many years of conflict, made the ultimate sacrifice.

**Mr. Allen** (United Kingdom): I would like to thank our briefers, starting with my Swedish colleague and, through her, I thank all who have done so much on the Peacebuilding Commission and the Liberia configuration. I would also like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Zouev for his impressively multilingual briefing, and Chid Liberty for what I thought was an inspiring and uplifting story. I think his comments showed just how important it is that the Security Council remain focused on the impact of conflicts on children and women. He really brought that home to us in an inspiring and uplifting way.

In 2003, when the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) was launched, the then-Secretary-General made his first report to the Council based on assessment mission. He said in his report then:

> "Liberia remains highly unstable, however, as armed groups, militia and criminal elements operate throughout the country"; (*S/2003/875, para. 22*)
>
> "[police] officers lack training and have not been paid since early 2002"; (*ibid., para. 24*)
>
> "[n]early 1 million Liberians, or a third of the population, are displaced"; (*ibid., para. 30*)
>
> "[i]t is estimated that Liberia has some 27,000 to 38,000 combatants, many of whom are children." (*ibid, para. 42*).

It is clear to us all that the Liberia of today is not the Liberia of 2003. We in the Council should be united in congratulating Liberia's leaders and people and in thanking UNMIL for that remarkable achievement. UNMIL has been able to keep and build the peace since 2003, which is a considerable feat given the history of exclusion, political instability and cycles of violence. We therefore pay tribute to Special Representative of the Secretary-General Farid Zarif and to all United Nations peacekeepers and staff who worked in Liberia for their work and their duty. We particularly remember the 202 United Nations peacekeepers who, sadly, gave their lives in service to the people of Liberia and in the service of all of us here who send those peacekeepers on such missions.

I want to use this moment to reflect on some of the lessons learned from UNMIL, in particular with regard to what went well but also what could have been done differently. They are important lessons not only for other peacekeeping missions but also for how we sustain peace more generally — a concept that we are all debating in different formats at the moment. As to what it did particularly well, UNMIL encouraged inclusive national ownership and supported local capacity, which are two key conditions for sustaining peace. The change brought about in Liberia's police force from the description by the then Secretary-General in 2003 to what exists now is perhaps an excellent example of that.

UNMIL also coordinated extremely effectively with international and regional actors, especially the Economic Community of West African States, which remains a shining light in the Council's engagement. The good offices of UNMIL were very effective at preventative diplomacy. For example, that helped to ensure that a difficult election process remained peaceful in accordance with the Constitution and the rule of law. UNMIL demonstrated the strengths of a comprehensive approach to sustaining peace. The joint peacebuilding plan between the Mission, the United Nations country team and the Government set clear and shared priorities to guide the transition. Under Sweden's leadership, the Peacebuilding Commission played an invaluable role.

However, we should also be honest about the shortcomings of the Mission and learn from those as well. Arguably, the Mission stayed for too long and created overdependence on the United Nations. A reluctance to discuss an exit meant that the transition planning started too late, which resulted in funding gaps and United Nations development actors not stepping up earlier. The Mission implementation plan should have included benchmarks and timescales in order to better focus staffing, resources and effort and allow the Security Council to better track progress. In the Security Council — and I know that it is a feature of some of what the Secretary-General has said to us over the past couple of months — we could perhaps have ensured that there were more realistic mandates with greater clarity on what constituted a sustainable end state.

Looking forward, through an enhanced Resident Coordinator office there is a clear role for the United Nations to support the new Government in consolidating stability and in promoting inclusive development. With its commitment to peaceful, just and inclusive societies, the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals provides a strong basis for that. The United Nations will also have a unique role in promoting coordination among the international donors in a way that supports the priorities of the Government of Liberia. The United Nations must be careful that, while it absolutely must provide that support, it must also not assume any of the responsibilities of the new Government. We would urge the Government to meet the commitments made in the peacebuilding plan.

In 2003, in his report the then Secretary-General concluded: "The road to lasting peace and security in Liberia is still fraught with multiple and formidable challenges" (*ibid., para. 105*). Liberia has certainly faced its fair share of challenges in the past 15 years. However, today we should celebrate the fact that, with the support of the United Nations, the people of Liberia have overcome them. Perhaps a reflections for all of us around this table is the fact that Liberia was once an intractable conflict. Once it hosted the largest United Nation peacekeeping mission. Once it saw terrible violence against women and children, including through child soldiers. A quarter of a million people died in the second civil war. There were the very familiar issues of internally displaced persons, refugees and food insecurity. Today we can look across some of the issues on our agenda and, very sadly, note the similarities. However, the ultimate lesson is perhaps that, with hard work, sustained engagement and the determination of us all, we can see more Liberias emerge out of today's agenda.

**Mrs. Gregoire Van Haaren** (Netherlands): The Kingdom of the Netherlands would like to start by thanking the briefers — Assistant Secretary-General Zouev, Ambassador Schoulgin Nyoni and Mr. Liberty — for their very informative briefings. I think that the picture that Mr. Liberty painted before our eyes of the children in their school uniforms shows them as a real symbol of not only the hope and but also the opportunities that lie ahead for Liberia. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Farid Zarif, who is here with us today, the preceding Special Representatives of the Secretary-General for Liberia for their leadership and all the staff of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) for their outstanding work in the country and for bringing it to where it is today.

The essence of today's briefing is to reflect on the successes and lessons learned from UNMIL and to look forward to a peaceful and inclusive Liberia. We can be proud that UNMIL has left a Liberia that looks very different to where it started. Allow me to focus on three important aspects with regard to the departure of UNMIL and the situation in Liberia: first, the successes of UNMIL and the progress in Liberia; secondly, the remaining challenges; and, thirdly, the lessons learned from UNMIL.

UNMIL was present in Liberia for 14 years. In those 14 years, the country made significant progress leading up to the elections in 2017 and 2018 and the peaceful transfer of power from President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf to President George Weah. We hope that President Weah continues to build on the work of the previous Administration, working towards a Liberia that is both peaceful and inclusive. Entrepreneurs and young professionals are the future of Liberia. Mr. Liberty, who addressed the Security Council today, is a part of a new generation and of the engine that will be essential to Liberia's future. Although we all acknowledge that it has come a long way, Liberia still has a few hurdles to overcome on the way ahead.

That brings me to my second point: addressing the root causes of the conflict and sustaining peace. We must consider that Liberia is a country that has seen violence. It is still a new democracy with young institutions. While the situation in Liberia is relatively stable, a stagnant economy, youth unemployment, human rights violations and a lack of land reform and reconciliation policies could pose threats to peace in the country, particularly now that UNMIL is no longer present.

In the light of the high-level event on sustaining peace next week, I want to highlight that the departure of UNMIL and the situation in Liberia provide an opportunity for the whole United Nations system to put the sustaining peace agenda into practice. We must seize that opportunity. Moving forward, the role of the United Nations country team and the active engagement of the Peacebuilding Commission will be crucial. In the light of that, the Kingdom of the Netherlands welcomes the necessary strengthening of the United Nations country team and the Office of the Resident Coordinator.

Those offices will be crucial to guaranteeing the active engagement of the United Nations in protecting human rights, ensuring the full and meaningful participation of women and girls, addressing the root causes of the initial conflict and building strong institutions to sustain peace in Liberia.

Moving on to my third point, the lessons learned from UNMIL and the importance of building on those lessons when considering exit strategies in other contexts are essential. The Liberia peacebuilding plan is the first of its kind requested by the Security Council. We consider such longer-term planning crucial when looking at exit strategies. The Liberia peacebuilding plan provides a solid basis for a common vision and direction for the country, which in turn makes it easier to determine the priorities of a United Nations country team. In addition to the preparation of a peacebuilding plan, we also learned that we must carefully time the exit of peacekeeping and special political missions.

Lastly, in the case of Liberia, we learned more with regard to the important interlinkage between peacekeeping and peacebuilding. One cannot occur without the other. We have to ensure that the host country's Government has the capacity and the authority to support both the peacekeeping and the peacebuilding process. And, as I said, it is important to reflect upon the lessons learned. In that light, we welcome today's presidential statement (S/PRST/2018/8), and would also welcome a broader report on the lessons learned in that regard.

Today will hopefully be the last time that we discuss the situation in Liberia on the agenda of the Council in this context. In conclusion, I would like to stress the importance of the good offices role of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel in Liberia and the role of a strengthened country team in Liberia in view of the sustaining peace agenda.

Additionally, I would like to highlight once again that the Liberian Government can count on the continued engagement of the Peacebuilding Commission country-specific configuration for Liberia as a tool to support the transition from UNMIL to a United Nations country team and beyond.

Let me reiterate our thanks to Special Representative Zarif, UNMIL and the United Nations country team for their great effort and leadership. I would also like to reiterate our support to the Government of Liberia along its path towards a peaceful and inclusive Liberia that offers plenty of opportunities for its people, in particular the children in their school uniforms that Mr. Liberty spoke about.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall now make a statement in my national capacity.

First of all, we would like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Alexander Zouev, Ambassador Irina Schoulgin Nyoni, and Mr. Chid Liberty for their valuable briefings.

After 14 years of civil war, today Liberia stands as an example of peacebuilding. Peru salutes the people and the authorities of that country for such an important achievement. We also emphasize the importance of the backing and support of the international community, the Peacebuilding Commission and such regional and subregional organizations as the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States. Liberia is also an example of how a United Nations mission can support a country's efforts to achieve sustainable peace. In welcoming the successful closure of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) after 15 years on the ground, we would like to highlight the work carried out by all of its personnel under the leadership of Mr. Farid Zarfif, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Liberia.

Peru expresses its satisfaction at having been able to contribute to the consolidation of peace in Liberia. Since UNMIL's inception and for 10 years, we have had military personnel deployed in the field, supporting the Liberian efforts. In order to meet the challenges that the construction of sustainable peace presents in this new phase of the Liberian process, we would like to underline the importance of continuing to advance in the following three areas.

The first is national reconciliation. We consider it important to accelerate the implementation of the peacebuilding plan. We encourage the authorities to adopt a legal framework that promotes reconciliation and inclusion. We emphasize that the participation of women and youth is key to building sustainable peace.

The second area is human rights. We are concerned by persistent human rights violations, mainly against women and children. We therefore welcome the establishment in Liberia of an Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, which we are confident will help to reverse that situation.

The third area is institutional reform. We consider it important to continue working on the construction of democratic institutions, increase social cohesion, guarantee access to justice, strengthen respect for human rights, expand the presence of the State throughout the territory and promote the development of the country. In that regard, we welcome the pro-poor agenda that the current Government of Liberia has designed within the framework of the peacebuilding plan and the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda. We also welcome the programmes for Liberian youth promoted by the United Nations Development Programme.

In conclusion, we would like to recall that Liberia is the first African country in which a woman was elected president. We encourage that the example of Mrs. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf be followed in the region and in the world, and that women assume leading roles in the public life of their countries and communities. We also want to welcome the commitment expressed by the Government of President George Weah to continue working in favour of peace and development in his country, with a special emphasis on the fight against poverty.

We are convinced that the United Nations country team, together with regional organizations and other international partners, will continue to support Liberia's efforts to strengthen its democratic institutional framework and promote national reconciliation, sustainable development and human rights.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Liberia.

**Mr. Davies** (Liberia): We have certainly heard great remarks today, including the briefing from the Assistant Secretary-General for Rule of Law and Security Institutions, Mr. Alexander Zouev.

May I join others and register our regrets for the sudden death of the Permanent Representative of Côte D'Ivoire. This has certainly dealt a huge blow to us all.

I would like to reaffirm the words of Ambassador Schoulgin Nyoni, and emphasize that today is not only a historic moment marking the final Security Council meeting on Liberia and the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), but also a moment of pride and joy for Liberians, particularly considering from where we have come, where we are and where we are headed as a nation.

It has been approximately eight years since the Government of Liberia requested the Secretary-General in May 2010 to place Liberia on the agenda of the Peacebuilding Commission. That request received a positive response from the President of the Security Council on 19 July of the same year, and today we are closing this chapter in a way. To whom can we be grateful for all the gains we have made over the years? I would start by thanking God Almighty, and the international community as a whole. Particularly, we would like to express our gratitude to the Economic Community of West African States, the African Union, the European Union and, of course, all the organs of the United Nations, as well as the Peacebuilding Commission. We also want to highlight the support received from philanthropic individuals and organizations. They all matter to us. To the people of Liberia, especially our mothers and sisters, and to UNMIL we pay special tribute, including Mr. Farid Zarif and his team. We are grateful. Their resilience has been a beacon of hope. Without their fortitude, we would not have made this far.

Do we close the chapter today without challenges? My response to that question is an emphatic no. Challenges still loom: decentralization, land ownership and disputes, corruption, violence against women and girls, a struggling economy and poor infrastructure, among others. We can assure the Council that those issues will remain front and centre for the current Administration. Yet for us to successfully surmount those challenges, Liberia will need continued and unflinching support, not just from the traditional donors but from everyone.

Meanwhile, we would like to seize this moment to assure all present of our renewed commitment to uphold the rule of law, in particular free speech — which is currently being enjoyed as before — and good governance, among others. We have no doubt that the national development plan, the Strategic Road Map for National Healing, Peacebuilding and Reconciliation, the peacebuilding plan, the Multi-Partner Trust Fund and the pro-poor agenda are invaluable and critical instruments to ensure that Liberia remains on the right trajectory, significantly in terms of peace sustenance and development. Additionally, we will continue to build on the positives of past leaderships and will guarantee that no Liberian is left behind.

At this juncture, allow me to pay special tribute to those who lost their lives as we together strived for peace in Liberia, including the 202 United Nations peacekeepers. We salute them all. We will continue to memorialize their immeasurable contribution to the peace Liberia enjoys today. May their souls find sweet and perpetual rest, and may their loved ones find the courage to move on if they have not.

In conclusion, I would like to make known the following. Even during our darkest moments and difficult days, and in our deepest despair, we still believed that Liberia would rise again. And today Liberia is rising. The briefing of Mr. Chid Liberty is an attestation. Liberia, once a beneficiary of a peacekeeping mission, is now a contributing nation to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali.

I thank you, Mr. President, for your kind consideration and for this esteemed honour.

*The meeting rose at 6 p.m.*